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# Own Weaknesses Nixon's Undoing

By RAY CROMLEY

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The aftermath of Watergate could be a profound change in the presidency of Mr. Nixon.

The root of the problem these past years, friends of the President have told me, is his deep lack of self-confidence, his nagging self-doubts—his feeling he is not liked, his cringing before criticism, his abhorrence of arguments and conflict, his lack of confidence in dealing with people, his continued fear he will be pressured into doing something he does not want to do, overwhelmed in the emotion of the moment by the personality of the man he is talking to.

Because of these fears, the above sources say, Mr. Nixon surrounded himself with a security blanket, one that has grown thicker with time — sycophants who played to and fed these Nixon weaknesses to gain overwhelming personal power for themselves.

They shielded him, flattered him, promoted his image, fed him tid-bits to convince him at every turn he was truly popular, that his opponents were in disarray and his critics were mean, bigoted men (thus the perverting of polls, the attempt to steal "secrets" from Watergate). That is, these men surrounded Mr. Nixon with a Potemkin Village of public relations designed to bolster his own confidence and increase their importance and their reputation for omniscience in his eyes.

It is all very well for experts to say it was clear early in the 1972 campaign that Mr. Nixon had the election cornered. But this reporter was informed as late as September and October that Mr. Nixon did not have that confidence. He was never certain he was on the right track in Vietnam, and had to be repeatedly bolstered.

Getting Mr. Nixon to commit himself to decisive action has been a continual struggle for men responsible for major programs.

These same contacts say, however, that in their experience the President has shown an ability to learn from crises. They think that when backed against the wall, as he is now—after a first reaction to run for cover and to not believe what he sees both in himself and the men he has trusted—he will turn to introspection and to an analysis of what is wrong with himself and his actions.

They expect (hope?) he will come again to those old friends he had turned away from, first because he could not take their criticism and their "contrary" advice, even in the privacy of his office, and second because the palace guard had so undermined Mr. Nixon's confidence in what they had to say.

They believe he will bring into the White House a variety of men, both more liberal and more conservative than himself—the likes of Daniel Moynihan, William Rogers, Robert Finch, Arthur Binns—men hopefully who will offset his own weaknesses. And that he will move away (as one once burned, twice shy) from men who flatter him.

The hope is that Mr. Nixon will bring into the White House a system of checks and balances to prevent another such catastrophe. This would bring a wider variety of views on crucial domestic problems such as inflation, unemployment, crime.

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